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AUTHOR Veir, Carole A.
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ABSTRACT

The Leadership Assessment Center process of selecting students for the Educational Administration Leadership Program at the University of Texas at Austin is described in this report. The process, involving an oral presentation, interview, standardized test of logical thinking, writing analysis, knowledge assessment, and leadership style assessment, is applicable to other program planning and career development programs. Data analysis of 180 students produced predictors of admission. Program strengths include minimal expense, a strong field orientation, minimal observer training, utilization of student information for identification of leadership success potential, and usefulness as a valid indicator of department effectiveness. Program outcomes are higher student placement rates and an increase in minority students. (LMI)

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# PERSPECTIVES ON THE FUTURE: IDENTIFYING POTENTIAL LEADERS THROUGH PRE-ADMITTANCE ASSESSMENT

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Carole Veir

The University of Texas at Austin
Department of Educational Administration
EDB 310, College of Education
Austin, Texas 78712-1291

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# PERSPECTIVES ON THE FUTURE: IDENTIFYING POTENTIAL LEADERS THROUGH PRE-ADMITTANCE ASSESSMENT

## Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to describe the Leadership Assessment Center process utilized at the University of Texas at Austin to select students for the Educational Administration Leadership Program. Although selection of students for the administration preparation program at the entrance and advanced level is the major emphasis, the variety of tools used provides information that can be used in a diagnostic manner to facilitate program planning and personal and career development. The assessment center approach provides an objective manner to select potential leaders. It is not intended to select administrators for positions in the schools. The Assessment Center is clearly a process, an event intended to assist the department in learning more about the candidate and to assist the candidate in learning more about themselves as individuals and leaders.

## Introduction

Each of the reform reports that has been generated in the last several years regarding the needs of future leaders in administration addresses the need to develop a screening mechanism by which potential leaders can be identified to be admitted to administration preparation programs. UCEA has also identified assessment as a means of identifying the most capable potential leaders for tomorrow's schools, being particularly sensitive to the need for minority candidates. Although there are numerous screening programs being utilized at present, most are put into effect after the student has been admitted to the department preparation program (eg. The University of New Mexico), or after preparation and prior to being hired by a district (NASSP center), and thus do not address the central issue of screening prior to admitting students to a preparation program. These programs do not utilize screening as a means of identifying students with the greatest potential prior to being admitted to the department/preparation program, and generally

screen out minority candidates based on traditional and limited information such as the GRE.

The University of Texas at Austin has been developing and implementing an assessment center that is used to screen into the department for administration/leadership preparation only students who demonstrate the most potential for leadership. The number of minority candidates has increased significantly. The Leadership Assessment Center has been in operation for four (4) years, and has developed a data bank of nearly 200 student profiles. Each student who applies to the Department of Educational Administration in the K-12 program (which includes special education administration, general Ph.D., administration, supervisory and superintendents certification, cooperative superintendency program, and master's degree program) must complete the assessment center activities prior to being considered for admittance to any program in the K-12 area of the department. Student data from the assessment center, along with other demographic data are then placed onto a profile. A committee of professors then determines the students who are to be presented to the Graduate Studies Committee for acceptance. At the GSC meeting, professors may ask for more information, accept or reject the recommendations, and make the final decision as to who is accepted into the department. In this way, students are carefully chosen and accepted into the department by all members. Students are admitted only twice a year. This method of admitting by groups has now become known in the literature as "cohorts."

## Need for Pre-Admission Screening

The Leadership Assessment Center was developed as a result of a series of events, the most important of which was a general dissatisfaction with the quality of some of the students in the K-12 program. The format used to admit students to the department was not unlike that of most graduate departments: GPA; GRE scores; a written statement from the student regarding professional goals and objectives (the assumption was that the student had written the statement); a Likert type set of qualities that 3 persons were requested to fill out (no one specific or who necessarily had any knowledge of the student

professionally). There was no attempt to meet with students in an interview setting, no attempt to determine if the personality of the person was one that would enhance leadership, no attempt to find out what the persons values or philosophies were, etc. In several instance, this lead to the admission of students into the department who had good GRE scores, but who were not persons who had the ability, personality, or potential to be leaders for the schools. A good GRE score alone does not denote potential for leadership, but rather potential to succeed in graduate programs. The department determined that program admission should be determined by multiple sources of evidence that included much more information than these standard measures, which provided little information about the most essential aspects of the ability to be a school leader and survive a rigorous graduate program with a strong focus on communication and interpersonal skills, leadership and decision-making procedures.

This traditional screening does not allow any personal contact, and tends to eliminate most minority candidates based upon standardized GRE scores. The department conducts a vigorous, systematic recruitment and selection process to attract bright, promising candidates of diverse race, ethnicity, and gender, including those of exceptional interpersonal skills.

**Development of Center Activities**

Professors from the department developed a series of activities that they thought would give them the kind of information that was critical to being successful in a graduate program of the nature and rigor of that at UT, as well as assessing the potential leadership ability of the students they would place in the field. The purpose of the activities in the center was to assess characteristics, abilities, skills, general knowledge and potential of future educational leaders that are highly desirable. The center currently has materials at two levels, one which is intended to assess abilities of potential administrators (focusing on untrained principals and supervisors who wish to enter the UT program), and the other on those administrators who have experience and wish to enter the superintendency leadership program.

An advisory board of prominent leaders (not just good 'ole boys) from school districts across the state was asked to review the center activities and make recommendations for improvements and change. In addition, principals, personnel directors, and superintendents were asked to review and make recommendations on the materials and activities. Following this, preparations were made to host the Leadership Assessment Center, which began in November 1986.

It is important to remember that the center focuses on two levels of assessment: one for persons wishing to become administrators and graduate students, and the second on students wishing to become superintendents. Neither is considered to be an analysis of data for persons READY to go into the field in their respective positions. The intent is provide information that will provide a range of useful data for several purposes.

There is a two-step process used. The first step takes place prior to being invited to attend the center, student applications are screened to assure they have the required prerequisites and essential requirements for the graduate program: GRE scores that appear to be within acceptable ranges; a Bachelor's degree; teaching credentials; taught at least 3-5 years; transcripts; last two years teacher evaluations; graduate school application; and the department application. Both the GPA and the GRE minimum acceptable standards for the graduate school can be waived with a letter from the department stating that they have successfully completed the assessment center and the department feels they will succeed without the minimum the graduate school requires. (If the minimum scores were always followed, there would be very few minority students in the department). As part of this admissions process, students are asked to provide the department with a variety of documents that are placed into their portfolio. Included in this are their last two years performance evaluations, a written statement of their goals and philosophy of education and administration, a biographical data sheet, any documentation they wish us to know about (ie: articles, presentations, etc), and a rating sheet from three persons they currently work for/with.

Following this initial screening, select students are invited to attend the Assessment Center which is used to identify the most promising students. The

second step is after the data is analyzed and is used for admission decisions, and subsequently as a diagnostic tool to profile strengths and weaknesses for program planning.

**Student Activities**

The exercises developed and/or used include both professor made and standardized norm referenced tests. The original assessment materials included several items (both standardized and professor made) which were not found to yield useful information, were redundant in focus, or inappropriate for the intended audience.

All center activities are conducted on Saturday between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Students are asked to do several activities at home and bring the completed items with them to the center. Other activities are conducted on site. Throughout the day, each student interacts with a minimum of 5-7 assessors, and the group as a whole. The chart below outlines the activities, the competencies/skills assessed, format and timelines of the center.

| Assessment Area | Time | Competency Area | Format |
|---|---|---|---|
| Oral Presentation | 1 hour | Organizational Ability<br>Oral Communication<br>Decision-making ability<br>Self-Presentation<br>Ability to think on feet<br>Operating under Stress<br>Judgement<br>Interpersonal skills | panel |

Candidates are asked to prepare a 30 minute presentation on a topic of their choice. Candidates are sent procedures and scoring sheets. Panel members interact with candidates, question, and discuss the topic/ presentation. There are generally 3-4 panel members per candidate. The format and criteria used for rating is the same as that used for the oral presentation for the doctoral exams in the department, however, candidates are not expected to fulfill the literature and research portions of the exam to the same degree.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Interview | 1 hour | General Knowledge of Education<br>Range of Interests<br>Oral Communications<br>Personal and professional motivations<br>Personal and Professional Values<br>Decision-making ability<br>Philosophy of Leadership<br>Interpersonal skills | panel |

A panel of 3-4 practicing school administrators, other professors, and/or advanced graduate students interviews the candidate on a cued response interview.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Watson-Glaser | 1 hour | Critical Thinking Skills<br>Analytical Thinking<br>(inference, recognition of assumptions, deduction, interpretation, evaluation of arguments) | individual |

This is a standardized test designed to evaluate how the candidate can reason analytically and logically. The test uses exercises that include problems, statements, arguments and interpretations of data similar to those that are encountered on a daily basis in the school setting. Data is available in the department on every students applying for the beginning administrator level of work in the department for the last 30 years.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| In-Basket Writing Samples | 1 hour | quality of writing<br>problem analysis<br>sensitivity<br>judgement | individual |

Candidates are asked to respond in writing to 4 items that they may be likely to encounter as a building level administrator.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Knowledge Assessment | untimed | knowledge of supervision<br>inservice education<br>testing and evaluation<br>curriculum development<br>learning objectives | home |

This instrument was developed and normed by a professor on staff. It relates to the types of items about which an Instructional Supervisor or Leader would be expected to have knowledge in today's schools.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Meyers-Briggs | untimed | Personal attributes and preferences (perception, judgment, decision-making, leadership style) | home |

This test determines the students' self-perceived leadership styles and provides a graphed profile of those styles. Questions deal with the way one likes to use perception and judgment, the way one looks at things and the way one goes about deciding things

**General Procedures**

The following general procedures are used during the assessment center. All assessment techniques seek to utilize the least costly data sources and analysis techniques, both in terms of labor, time and resources.

a. all candidates are assigned a number, no names are used. This assures anonymity when decisions are made

b. candidates meet with assessors for a period of one day

c. the ratio of assessors to candidates is 3 or 4:1

d. candidates bring completed materials with them

e. assessors and candidates participate in both structured and unstructured activities. There is opportunity for social interaction as well. Social interactions are not included in the evaluations

f. assessors are provided with individual schedules, materials they will need, a map of the building, student numbers

g. assessors are not paid for their participation, it is by invitation only

h. assessors deposit completed materials before they leave; they do not assist in the rating and profiling of students

i. assessors assist in scoring oral presentations and interviews

j. the center is held in the College of Education offices and classrooms, therefore eliminating the need for expensive facilities arrangements

k. assessors and candidates are provided with juice and rolls in the morning, lunch, and coffee breaks

**Choosing and Training Assessors**

Letters of invitation to participate as an assessor are sent out to practitioners. Practitioners are chosen from school districts, the state department of education, educational service centers, private industry personnel involved in the schools, other universities, other professors from departments with the college, and advanced graduate students within the department. Local school districts encourage their experienced administrators to participate as assessors and submit lists of personnel to the direct of the center (assistant principals are not invited to participate at this point in time).

Assessors are asked to assist in rating candidates on two different items, the interview and the oral presentation. When assessors respond that they are willing to participate, they are mailed a letter of explanation and copies of the instrumentation. They are asked to keep them confidential. They are invited to call the director if they have questions, and invited to come one-half hour early on the day of the center to meet with the director and review any questions or procedures. The materials are self-explanatory, related to the knowledge base of the assessors, and simple to score. No other training is done, as it is thought that the most objective and natural responses are desired on these two items as measured by practicing, experienced administrators, and potential employers.

Although no formal feedback has been requested of the field assessors, responses of district administrators and other field assessors to their involvement has been very positive. Most respond that they learned a lot about new areas the students were informed in that they had not had the opportunity to read or learn about, that they learned about new books and techniques, that they are excited about the quality of the persons being screened, that they will keep their eye on one or two for positions in the next year, and that they learned a lot about themselves as well. Others tell us they have new insights, have learned a lot about interviewing and assessing the skills of prospective personnel, and that they have a better perspective on education. Several assessors have participated in every center we have had to date. They like interacting with administrators and other personnel from a variety of districts and across the state, and look forward to the opportunity to

be a part of this important process. Most request to be invited back for the next center. Some send formal letters of apology when they are asked to participate and have prior commitments!

The input and objectivity of the field assessors lends valuable insights and credibility to the program, provides positive interactions between the university and the districts and other public, and opens many doors for the students and the university as well. It creates a positive climate of cooperation between the field and university activities and endeavors to provide qualified leaders for the schools. It is an important step toward achieving cooperative relations in an area that merits input from everyone to achieve excellence.

**Scoring and Profiling Materials**

Scoring of the materials departs from normal assessment center procedures. Assessors do not reach consensus concerning each measurement or the overall profile of the student following completion of the exercises. Each assessor scores the interview or oral presentation and turns in their materials at the end of the day of activities. In-baskets are circulated to a faculty member to score. Other materials are scored by answer key or computer, or by advanced graduate students trained to assist in this process. Since each item is identifiable by number only, students assistants are not subject to confidential information about specific students. The student's score for each item is then placed onto a total participant as well as an individual profile. Scoring and profiling the data takes approximately one week to complete.

Prior to the department Graduate Faculty meeting, 3-4 professors from the K-12 unit of the department review the profiles, rank the students, and make recommendations for admission or non-admission based on the data. Each of the profiles is then brought to the Graduate Faculty meeting, the recommendations reviewed for the entire faculty to vote on. Student who are in the upper two quartiles are generally admitted to the program. For students with any scores below the second quartile, additional data, is provided (such as GPA, total GRE, years of teaching, years of administrative experience, Meyers-Briggs profile, the schools previously attended, the number of hours of graduate credits they have completed, their present position, and other such data). Faculty members vote on each students' admission to the department.

Although this sounds like an overwhelming task for the department faculty, it only takes place an average of two times a year. The faculty feels the quality of students in the department has increased significantly due to this process, and it is worth the time it takes to review each student to assure quality control.

Students who are accepted into the administration program/department are notified by mail. Upon acceptance of the invitation to become a student in the department, students make an appointment to develop a plan of study. When students come in to discuss their plan of study, the advisor reviews their strengths and weaknesses as shown in center activities, and uses this data to assist in plan of studies to be undertaken. In addition, the individual career path is discussed in light of the information available.

**Impact on Minority Students**

One of the most positive aspects of the assessment center process has been the impact of minority students participation and success. Standard measures required by the graduate school, such as the GRE, do not serve most minority students well. The assessment center allows the department to collect additional data that may offset the GRE scores, provide a broader look at the competencies and skills of the student, and allow the student an opportunity to show their abilities in an unbiased situation. The department has used the data from these experiences with successful minority students to develop norms for the department in each of the areas assessed. This not only provides the department with a wealth of data on the individual students, but provides us with information with which to justify the admission of graduate students who do not meet the norms of the graduate school. The success of these students in the department programs as well as in their subsequent placements in the field assure the department that the assessment methods being used are providing opportunities to qualified minorities. Half of the students admitted to the superintendency program in the 1989 cycle were minority students, all but one of whom would not have been accepted under normal graduate school GRE norms.

An area that still needs considerable work is with minority women. Data reveal that a disproportionate number of minority women applying to the

program are still not being admitted. This is due in part to the data that also reveal that minority women are scoring lower than minority men on several of the data sets. On all standardized tests, women are scoring lower than men. When looked at by race, the overall scores of the minority women are much lower than those of the Anglo women. We are working on this area diligently, including itemized analysis of the Knowledge Assessment test to determine if it is any way gender or race biased, and at the Interview to determine if the items reveal any bias or other information that may assist in this area. The standardized tests are out of our realm of influence.

**Success of Students**

Students completing administration preparation programs in Texas are required to take state exams in each of the areas of administration in which the state issues certifications (principal, supervisor, and superintendent). The state began this exam process in Summer 1987. Data from the results of the exams is issued to each university following each examination. Comparative data from across the state is provided as well. The data from these exams indicate that every student who has been admitted to the preparation program since this screening was implemented has successfully passed the state examination in each of the three certification areas. In addition, the data shows that students from this university score 5-20 points higher on each section of the exam, and have a higher overall average than any of the other thirty-one administrator preparation programs in the state. There is, however, no way to derive a direct correlation between the center and the exams, since the strength of the preparation program itself is a substantial factor. On the other hand, the data make it clear that something positive is taking place in the program to rank the highest in the state on the exam scores.

Another indictor of success is the placement rate and positions held by student who were screened through the center and have completed the program. There is unfortunately no placement data available prior to 1986 for comparison. However, since 1986, every student who has been screened and has completed the program has been placed into an administrative position either prior to completing or upon completion of the program. It is not

uncommon for students to have job offers while completing their internships. Many factors contribute to the high placement rate and it is hoped that the assessment center process is one of the factors assuring the field personnel that the students who are completing the program are "the cream of the crop", especially since many of the decision makers are assessors who were involved in the process of selecting the students. Again, there is not an easy way to show a direct relationship between placement and the assessment center.

The number of students who have not completed the program is minimal. Of the total number of students admitted to the program through the assessment process, three have not completed their programs. Of those three, two moved with position transfers of spouses, and one took a position at the state department of education. All other students have completed their programs to date.

**Frequency of Center Activities**

The center is conducted twice a year (November for January admissions and March for June admissions. All students in the beginning administrators preparation program,whether at the M.Ed. or Ph.D. level, enter together in June, but are allowed to take one course outside of the department in January if they wish. Once every two years candidates are screened for the cooperative superintendency and Ph.D. programs, and every other year for a cooperative doctorate program. This means the center is conducted between 2 and 4 times a year. The largest center had 54 candidates, and the smallest. The number of students accepted from any one center varies. The most has been the acceptance of 93% of those applying; the least has been acceptance of only 46% of the applicants. All data are kept in a data bank linked into the mainframe computer on campus, files are kept in the department, a copy of each students' profile is placed into his/her permanent department file.

**Findings**

Since 1986 data has been gathered on over 180 students who have completed the assessment center. Of these students, 112 have been admitted to the program This number includes 77 Anglos, 11 Blacks, 22 Hispanics, and two Asians (due to the small n for Asians, the data for them has not been included

in the breakout analysis). Although the admits for minority candidates may appear low in relation to the Anglo admits, it represents a significant increase in the number of minority admits. This is due in part to the data that is collected, and how it is used in decision making for admission.

Computer programs have been written to analyze the data and provided appropriate types of feedback and statistical breakdowns. Norming of the data has provided a variety of information broken down by race, years of experience, gender, etc. upon which decisions and assessment center modifications can be made.

Correlations and stepwise analysis were run to determine the most important predictors of admission based upon all of the data gathered in both the pre-assessment and assessment center process. Data reveal that the most important predictors of admission are:

*GRE verbal
*Oral Presentation
*Knowledge Assessment
*Interview
*Watson-Glaser

Among the factors that were found to not be influential in admission decisions were years of teaching experience, age, years of administrative experience and GRE quantitative score. GPA was also found not to be an influencing factor in admissions. Of the students applying for the program, the following GPA's were found:

| | APPLYING | | ADMITTED | | DENIED | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | mean | sd | mean | sd | mean | sd |
| Anglo | 3.51 | .37 | 3.54 | .38 | 3.34 | .31 |
| Black | 3.38 | .31 | 3.41 | .39 | 3.37 | .19 |
| Hispanic | 3.47 | .36 | 3.47 | .39 | 3.43 | .29 |

In looking at the data on GRE verbal scores, which were found to be a more influential factor than either the GRE quantitative score or the total GRE score (students are not required to submit an analytical score at this time), this data reveals that the students who are admitted to the preparation program at UT compare favorably to the nation data as reported by the Educational Testing

Service. Data from the ETS reveal that for Graduate majors in education, the following is the current status of their GRE verbal scores:

| GRE (v) Admits | mean | sd | ETS | mean | sd |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Anglo | 566 | 74.8 | | 472 | 101 |
| Black | 422 | 68.5 | | 356 | 86 |
| Hispanic | 472 | 94.5 | | 383 | 88 |

Correlations and reliabilities were run on the interview and oral presentations to determine consistency among raters. For the interviews, the coefficient is .76, revealing good consistency among raters for this exercise. For the oral presentations, the coefficient is .78, again revealing consistency among the raters on this exercise as well.

Means for applicants from the Watson Glaser scores are based on norms from 1940 college students participating in a school principalship project at the University of Texas. The mean score for beginning administrator applicants in 1940 was 52. The population for that project was Anglo male participants. The Watson Glaser data from this study reveals scores for all Anglos have a mean of 72, with those accepted having a mean score of 77, Blacks accepted with a mean score of 51, and Hispanics with a mean score of 43. There are some interesting factors to be analyzed with this data, as the average score of all Black applicants is the same (-1) as that of Anglo males in 1940. Just what this means in terms of potential and cognitive ability is not known at this time. It is currently being researched.

| Mean of applicants | | sd | Mean of admits | sd |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Anglo | 72 | 19.3 | 77 | 16 |
| Black | 41 | 28.0 | 51 | 27 |
| Hispanic | 45 | 25.0 | 43 | 28 |

The In-basket exercises have been the most difficult ones to deal with from several perspectives. Due to difficulties with the data in converting it to the mainframe statistical package, the in-baskets were not included in the analysis for determining the most important factors for admission. However, faculty do review the data and the students ranking among the candidates completing the center. This is an area in which much revision is currently being done.

There are two forms of the In-basket exercises, one for inexperienced, beginning candidates, and the other for experienced candidates applying for the superintendency and Ph.D. program. Data from In-basket exercises A, those prepared for beginning candidates, reveal an interrater reliability of .49. This is not an acceptable reliability. Interrater reliability for Form B is .71. This is acceptable, but not very high. One of the problems with this exercise has been, from my perspective, that only one person has been asked to score each set of items for each student. This does not lend itself to very objective data. It is difficult to determine interrater reliability when there is only one person analyzing the data. Beginning with the November center, three raters will be asked score each in-basket, new scoring and data tables, and modified answer keys have been developed to assist the raters in displaying the scores so they can be input into the mainframe more easily.

In looking at internal consistency of the items in In-basket exercises Forms A and B, the overall coefficient for Form B is .91. This reveals good internal consistency of the items (problem analysis, sensitivity, and judgment). For Form A, the coefficient is .88. This again reveals good internal consistency items (problem analysis, sensitivity, and judgment), However, when taken as separate items for analysis, there are some weaknesses revealed in the individual items being measured. These items are being rewritten and will be field tested prior to being used in future centers.

The other area examined with the In-basket exercises is the candidates overall writing ability. The rater is asked to look at items such as syntax, spelling, grammatical errors, tense, etc. and place the total number of errors next to the item being measured. A scale is provided for determining whether the student has an acceptable rating on these items. This has proven to be a problematic area as well. Most of the persons scoring do not look at the grammatical aspects of the writing, thus the director has to re-read each in-basket to determine errors in this area (this is where the old degree in English grammar comes in handy!) Although we know that writing is a problem for many students, it appears that faculty are not willing to look at the quality of writing of the student prior to entering the program. This too is being worked on.

**Unique aspects of the UT Center**

Unique aspects of the assessments being done at the University of Texas include the following:

*Assessors are from a broad range of positions in public and private sectors involved with the schools

*Assessors are not asked to assist with scoring

*Assessors are not required to observe and synthesize information from a variety of exercises, they are asked to assist with Oral Presentations and Interviews only

*The entire Assessment Center takes place in one day

*The assessment information is used for admission and diagnosis for program planning

*The method for summarizing information from multiple exercises and sources of data is determined ahead of time, rather than in post-exercise consensus activity

*There is no consensus reached, rather students are profiled based on norms developed within the department

*The center involved assessment activities for two different levels of administrator preparation, beginning and advanced

*Student profiles are generated within a week of the center

*Student profiles and recommendations for student admission are brought before the entire faculty for acceptance into the department. In this way, the department, and not a single individual is responsible for the student and their experiences within the department

*Norms for minority students have been developed within the department

*Success rates of the students are very high

*Professors from other institutions are used in the assessment process

## Importance of the Data and Center Activities

A study of the assessment center techniques and data is important because the need for successful leaders in administration is critical, thus the need to identify persons prior to providing them with a preparation program is a critical activity for universities. Neither the students nor the universities have time to invest into students they can only hope will be successful graduate students and only hope will be able to find positions as leaders in the nations schools. The schools and the children deserve better odds than that. Universities have an obligation to themselves and to the community to select students with the most potential to become leaders of our schools. They should expect that kind of leadership from a university and they can. Warm bodies that pay tuition are not enough anymore. Universities do not have the resources, nor do school districts, to hope they can develop persons into leaders for the future. This assessment center provides a means of screening into the program only those students that the field personnel who will hire, and the university personnel who will train can see have the potential to be outstanding leaders for our schools. Thus, the field personnel are provided an opportunity to have input into the potential leaders from the beginning, are more willing to provide internship placements, are anxious to follow students progress be because they had a hand in choosing the students, and are willing to hire the students they have some small investment in. In addition, the university is provided with a group of students who have more capabilities based on more than the score on one test (GRE) as traditionally done, have seen the weaknesses of the students, and thus are able to design an students' preparation program to meet the needs of each individual student.

## Summary

As can be determined by the this paper, there is significant useful data that can be gathered through the assessment center process that can assist universities in determining their candidates for administration programs. There is also a need to keep the assessment center is an evolving process so that improvements can be made as needed and determined by continuous data analyzation.

One of the strengths of this model is the involvement of the field practitioners to assist in choosing the candidates. It helps the university avoid the Ivory Tower syndrome when choosing candidates to send into the field that the field may not wish to hire. We are indeed in touch with the realities, needs, and desires of the field when choosing student to become future administrators. This has proven to be a mutually beneficial endeavor.

The model that is presented here is one that could easily be replicated at other universities. It involves minimal expense, and has a strong field orientation, which is desirable from all perspectives. Observer training is minimal, and graduate students can be easily trained to assist in scoring and preparing data due to the use of student numbers instead of names. In addition, the information gathered about each of the students assists greatly in knowing something about their potential as leaders in administration, as well as in program planning. It also keeps the department on track, as we do follow-up studies once the students are in the field, and thus know our own areas within the program that need strengthening.

The long-term benefits have begun to pay-off, as demonstrated by the student success data and placement rates. In addition, the number of minority students admitted to the program using data other than the traditional measures has increased significantly.

The philosophy of the department is to screen better qualified students into the preparation program, so that the product will be stronger leadership in the schools. This is not something anyone with a high GPA or overall GRE may be able to do. By using this way to select candidates, the candidate going in to the program has more potential to be the kind of product the schools desire and need to provide leadership for tomorrows schools.